



MEDIA RELEASE

3 August 2026

Havelock hosted the inaugural Havelock Memorial Vigil to Canberra's Homeless this evening to mark the start of National Homelessness Week 2026

[Havelock Housing](#) has this evening hosted the inaugural [Havelock Memorial Vigil to Canberra's Homesless](#) to mark the opening of [National Homelessness Week 2026](#). The event was a dignified gathering and a moment for the Canberra community to come together in remembrance of those we have lost to homelessness, and in solidarity with those still living rough in Canberra each night.

"Each year in Australia, people die from homelessness. They die on streets, in parks, in cars and in temporary shelters, in circumstances that a compassionate and wealthy country like ours should not permit. They die without a formal moment of recognition. Without names recorded. Without a community gathered to remember them. Tonight we are changing this," said Havelock Housing CEO, Kylie Maidens.

At tonight's vigil, Ms Maidens reinforced that these people are not just statistics.

"They are not statistics. They are people. And they deserve to be remembered. They could be your mother, your father, your sister, your brother, your aunt, your uncle, your child, your friend, your neighbour, or your colleague. They could be someone you love. They could be someone sitting beside you today. Perhaps, under different circumstances, they could even be you," Ms Maidens continued.

According to the 2021 Census, around 882 Canberrans were living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out on any given night. A further 447 people were living in severely overcrowded conditions. Approximately 60% of the ACT's homeless population is male, and

young people aged 19 to 24 are among the most likely to experience homelessness in the territory.

The overall rate of homelessness across the ACT sits at 39 people per 10,000. While that sits below the national average, the demand for emergency housing and frontline services across Canberra remains persistently high.

Ms Maidens went on to say that each year an estimated 28 Canberrans lose their lives each year as a result of homelessness and its associated impacts.

“While the ACT does not routinely publish homelessness mortality data, this estimate has been derived from national figures and the ACT's proportion of Australia's homeless population. It is not an official statistic, but it provides a powerful indication of the human cost that homelessness may have within our own community.

“28 lives. 28 stories. 28 people who mattered. People who were loved, who had hopes and dreams, who had talents, aspirations, and futures ahead of them. Too often, when we talk about homelessness, we talk about numbers. We discuss housing shortages, waiting lists, rental affordability, and increasing demand for support services. While those statistics are important, they can sometimes make us forget that behind every number is a person.

“What is less widely understood is the devastating impact homelessness has on health and life expectancy. National research has found that people who experience homelessness die more than 30 years younger than the general Australian population. The median age of death for people with a history of homelessness support is just 55 years. For those who have experienced rough sleeping, the median age of death is only 46 to 47 years,” Ms Maidens continued.

Havelock’s vigil was designed to be deliberately simple and meaningful and included a candle lighting ceremony; short addresses from Havelock Housing’s CEO Kylie Maidens, and Board Chair Carol Croce, along with ACT Shelter CEO Corinne Dobson and community voices including those with lived experience of homelessness; a moment of collective reflection and a minute’s silence in remembrance of those we have lost.

“Research consistently shows that homelessness is associated with significantly higher rates of physical illness, mental ill-health, trauma, violence, addiction, social isolation, and premature death. The leading causes of death among people who have experienced homelessness include suicide, accidental overdose, heart disease, and other health conditions that are often preventable or treatable when people have access to stable housing and appropriate support,” Ms Maidens concluded.

If you or someone you know is experiencing homelessness you can get in touch with Havelock Housing today by calling (02) 6257 2277 or email info@havelock.org.au

For more information on Havelock Housing and the work they do locally with affordable, social and specialist disability housing to assist those in need across the ACT and Southern NSW region, or to donate to Havelock, visit www.havelockhousing.com.au

Media contact:

For more information, images or to arrange an interview with Havelock Housing or ACT Shelter, please contact **Lauren Griffiths, Threesides Marketing**, 0417 409 264
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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

About Havelock Housing

As the oldest and largest frontline community housing provider in Canberra, Havelock Housing has more than 40 years' experience delivering social, affordable and specialist disability housing across the ACT.

Since 2015, Havelock has supported more than 2,000 individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, across a wide range of circumstances including rough sleeping, domestic and family violence, mental health challenges, disability and youth homelessness. Today, Havelock manages 406 active tenancies providing stable and affordable housing to residents across the territory.

Havelock's services are built on the belief that safe housing is a fundamental foundation for wellbeing, independence and community connection.

More info: havelockhousing.com.au

About National Homelessness Week

National Homelessness Week 2026 runs from Monday 3 August to Sunday 9 August.

Hosted by Homelessness Australia every year, Homelessness Week aims to build community support and government commitment to ending homelessness across the country. In 2026, the national theme is *Homelessness Action Now*.

More info: homelessnessaustralia.org.au

